NOTES

It will be welcome news to astronomers throughout the world to hear that the Board of Visitors of the Royal Observatory have determined to ask the Government to grant the sum of 5,000*l.* to enable *photographic* observations to be made of the approaching Transit of Venus. It is a matter of wonder that now, when the labours of De la Rue and Rutherford have brought this most perfect means of astronomical record to a pitch of perfection which it is scarcely needful to surpass, it is still ignored in official observatories. In the matter of the Transit of Venus, it will more than double the chances of success, and Mr. Rutherford has shown that in other inquiries it enables an only moderately skilled person to do in a month what a Bessel would require years to compass by the old method. There is no doubt that the appeal to Government will be successful. Would that we had a Physical Observatory and a Board of Visitors to look after other phenomena which we are now neglecting, the observation of which is even of more importance in the present state of science than that of any number of Transits of Venus!

At the conclusion of a recent lecture at the Royal Institution Dr. Carpenter "expressed the earnest hope that the liberal assistance of Her Majesty's Government, which has already enabled British Naturalists to *obtain the lead* in this inquiry, would be so continued as *to enable them to keep it for the future.* In particular he called attention to the suggestion lately thrown out by M. Alex. Agassiz that an arrangement might be made by our own Admiralty with the naval authorities of the United States, by which a thorough survey, Physical and Biological, of the North Atlantic should be made between the two countries, so that British and American explorers, prosecuting in a spirit of generous rivalry labours most important to the science of the future, might meet and shake hands on the mid-ocean." We fear that if we do not bestir ourselves the credit which has been won by British scientific enterprise will pass elsewhere. The United States Government is not only preparing the Deep-sea Exploring Expedition, of which we gave an account in our last issue, but is also fitting out a similar expedition to the North Pacific. The German Government is about to send a like expedition to explore the depths of the Atlantic to the west of Portugal, where the *Porcupine* Expedition of last year met with its greatest biological successes; and the Swedish Government has already despatched two ships expressly fitted for deep-sea exploration, to Baffin's Bay; the Natural History part of the work being under the charge of Mr. Lindape, who acted as assistant-naturalist in the last *Porcupine* Expedition. What are our Scientific men as a body, what is our Government doing? We grieve to say that up to the present time we have heard of no general appeal to the Government for the required help. And thus, having shown other nations the way to the treasures of knowledge which lie hid in the recesses of the ocean, we are falling from the van into the rear, and leaving our rivals to gather everything up. Is this creditable to the Power which claims to be mistress of the seas? Is it fair to the eminent men who have freely given their best services to the nation, and obtained for it a glorious scientific victory? If their success is regarded by other countries as so distinguished that they are vieing with each other for a participation in it, surely we ought at least to *hold our own.*

A paragraph has appeared in several papers to the effect that the lime light is to be displayed on the great clock tower at Westminster during the sitting of Parliament. We are glad to announce that the light in question will not be the lime light, but a much more brilliant one - the magneto-electric. Such a light has now for some time past shone from the Capitol at Washington, and was under the consideration of Lord John Manners some few years ago. Mr. Ayrton, we learn, has expressed great interest in the matter, an estimate has been called for, and as there is already steam power available, we may hope that, under Dr. Tyndall's direction, the new light will soon brightly shine.

The Educational Lectures delivered at the London Institution during the past session by Prof. Huxley, Dr. Odling, and Mr. R. A. Proctor, were followed by examinations, and on Wednesday last the prizes and certificates obtained by the students were distributed by Mr. Thomas Baring, M.P., F.R.S., the president of the Institution. In Chemistry, the first prize was awarded to Frederick Garrett, and the second prize to A. J. Richardson. In Biology, Miss Dora Harris gained the first prize, while A. Percy Lloyd and Miss F. L. Tolmé obtained second prizes. In Astronomy, the first prize was gained by A. J. Wallis, and second prizes fell to Miss Annie Piper and Edward Garrett.

W. T. Thistleton Dyer, Esq., commenced last Monday a course of six lectures on the Natural History of a Flowering Plant, at the Royal College of Science for Ireland, St. Stephen's Green. The lectures will be continued on the following Monday and Thursday evenings.

The Society of Arts has this year conferred its Albert Gold Medal upon Mr. Cole, C.B. It seems agreed on all hands that without Mr. Cole we should have had neither the South Kensington Museum nor any of those Science and Art classes which are now either in full work or are springing up throughout the country, and are doing an incalculable amount of good. If this be so, then certainly Mr. Cole has done more for the spreading of Science and Art in this country than any other man of his time; and our scientific and artistic bodies should join with the Society of Arts in acknowledging his services.

The Royal Commission on Scientific Instruction and the Advancement of Science recommenced their sittings on Tuesday last, and will meet again to-morrow.

Prof. Humphry, of Cambridge, will hold classes for instruction in Practical Anatomy on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays at half-past twelve during the Long Vacation, commencing July 4. There will also be classes for instruction in Practical Histology on Wednesdays and Fridays at half-past twelve, commencing July 5. This, together with a course of instruction in the Physiological Laboratory, under the direction of Dr. Michael Foster, will constitute a course of Practical Physiology. Gentlemen who have entered to the Anatomical Lectures will be at liberty to attend these classes without additional fee.

There will be an election to a Science Fellowship at Corpus Christi College at the beginning of Michaelmas Term. Candidates must have passed all the examinations required by the University for the degree of B.A., and must not be in possession of any benefice or property which would disqualify for retaining a Fellowship. This examination will commence on Monday, October 9, and will be specially in chemistry. Candidates are requested to communicate with the president, either personally or by letter, at their convenience, before the end of Act Term.

The Sheepshanks Astronomical Exhibition at Trinity College, Cambridge, has been awarded to Horace Lamb, Scholar of the College. The Exhibition is open to all members of the University, the only conditions being that the person elected shall become a member of Trinity College.

At a recent Court of Governors of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, Mr. Paget, F.R.S., was appointed consulting surgeon to the hospital. At a Court held last Thursday, Mr. Callender was elected surgeon. There is now, therefore, a vacancy for the office of assistant-surgeon to the hospital.

We greatly regret to hear of the alarming illness of Mr. Grote, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of London. His long and useful life has been devoted to the cause of higher edu-

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cation in this country, and since the foundation of the University he has been one of its staunchest and most unwearied friends.

WE observe that Miss Esther Greatbatch, who has just passed the second (special) examination for women at the University of London in French and in Harmony and Counterpoint, also took the second prize at the examination which followed Prof. Guthrie's Lectures on Physics at the London Institute, in February, 1870, and out of seventy-four candidates, the first prize for the examination in Physical Geography, which followed Prof. Huxley's lectures on that subject in 1869. In 1868 Miss Greatbatch passed as a Junior with first class honours, and gained a prize for Mathematics at the Cambridge Local Examination. In December, 1870, she passed as a Senior, with first class honours, gaining the Mill-Taylor Scholarship and a prize for Political Economy. Miss Greatbatch did not take up the Mill-Taylor Scholarship, which can only be held at Cambridge. She is a pupil of the North London Collegiate School for Girls, where she has received the whole of her education. The lady to whom we alluded last week is not the first who has gained a special distinction of proficiency in Natural Philosophy and Chemistry at the examinations of the University of London, that honour having been conferred on Miss Orme in 1870.

PROF. HUXLEY'S "Elementary Lessons in Physiology" are about to be translated into Hindostanee.

THE Paris correspondent of the *Daily News* states that the chateau of the Marquis Laplace at Arcueil Cachan, which escaped the Prussians, has been plundered by a band of house-breakers from the Mouffetard district. The manuscripts of the celebrated astronomer were thrown into the Bièvre, from which the original of "The Mechanism of the Heavens," in the author's handwriting, has subsequently been fished out. The library, which was rich in rare books, souvenirs, and works of art, has been looted and devastated.

THE medal given by the Royal Geographical Society to Dr. Keith Johnston is in acknowledgment of the services of the devotion of more than forty years of an unusually active life to purely geographical pursuits. He has done more for popularising geography than almost any other living author. The publication of his "Physical Atlas" in 1847 gave an unexampled impetus to the study of Physical Geography in Britain, and his publications since then, of great utility and importance, have been very numerous.

WE learn from the *Journal of Botany* that the well-known cryptogamist Fries accompanies the Swedish Arctic expedition as botanist, and MM. Lindahl and Nauckhoff as zoologist and geologist. The expedition intends to visit Baffin's Bay, and to return in October.

A NEW botanical magazine has just appeared at Lund in Sweden, "Botaniska Notiser," edited by Otto Nordstedt. It will be specially devoted to Scandinavian botany, and to a review of all botanical papers published in Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and Finland.

THE yearly part, just issued, of the Natural History Transactions of Northumberland and Durham contains, as usual, many valuable contributions to scientific literature. The first paper is a Revision of the Catalogue of Coleoptera of Northumberland and Durham, by Mr. T. J. Bold, including 1,520 species, about one half the number hitherto found in Great Britain. Dr. W. C. M'Intosh contributes a short Report on the Collection of Annelids dredged off Northumberland and Durham, and Mr. George Hodge a Catalogue of the Echinodermata of the same counties, forty-three in number, accompanied by interesting remarks on each species, and illustrated by four plates. From Messrs. W. Kirby and J. Duff we have some elaborate Notes on the Geology of part of South Durham, the lower coal measures in the neighbourhood of the village of Etherley, embellished by diagrams showing the position of the coal-seams. Then follow five papers on remarkable fossils of the carboniferous series by Mr. Albany Hancock, in conjunction with Messrs. T. Atthey and R. Howse; viz., On the Labyrinthodont Amphibian, *Loxomma Allmanni*, being its first occurrence in the neighbourhood; On a new generic form of the same order, to which the name *Batrachiderpeton lineatum* is given; On another new form from the magnesian limestone, *Lepidotosaurus Duffii;* A description of a specimen from the marl-slate of the oldest known reptile, *Proterosaurus Speneri*, and of a new species, *P. Huxleyi;* and A description of four specimens from the same formation of *Dorypterus Hoffmanni;* these papers are illustrated with six well-executed plates. The last paper is on *Saccamina Carteri*, a new foraminifer from the carboniferous limestone of Northumberland (with one plate), by Mr. H. B. Brady; and the volume closes with an admirable address from the president of the Tyneside Naturalists' Field Club, Mr. G. S. Brady, in which he gives a sketch of the work of the society during the past year, and of the general additions to natural history literature during the same period, especially in the departments of "Spontaneous Generation" and the "Origin of Species." The president for the present year is Mr. G. C. Atkinson.

THE last number of the "Bücher-verzeichniss," published by Friedländer and Son, of Berlin, is a valuable and copious catalogue of astronomical literature in English, French, German, Latin, and the other European languages.

A THIRD edition of Prof. Brünnow's "Lehrbuch der Sphärischen Astronomie" has just been published in Berlin.

WE are favoured by Mr. Login with a photograph representing the produce of one grain of wheat grown on the Egyptian system in India, which gave off 160 shoots, and has produced 105 ears of corn; another, 4½ ft. high, which produced 45 ears from 4½ in. to 5 in. in length; and another 3½ ft. high, with about 50 ears. These are represented as about average results from this system, and are contrasted with a single plant grown on the native broad-cast system, assisted by irrigation, producing seven ears from each grain, and another without irrigation, producing from five to fifteen ears, and also represented as average results. We congratulate the Indian authorities upon having a man of Mr. Login's wide grasp in their service. This is by no means the first time we have referred to his labours.

WITH reference to the alleged disappearance of Aurora Island, one of the New Hebrides group, to which we alluded some weeks since on the authority of a paper read before the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, a correspondent of the *Shipping and Mercantile Gazette* affirms that the whole story is a fable. The original statement rested on a notice by Captain Plock, of the French ship *Adolphe*, bound from Iquique to London, that he passed over the position of the Iles de l'Aurore, as marked on his French chart of the South Atlantic, and saw nothing of them, from which he concluded that they had disappeared. It appears, however, that the Iles de l'Aurore (Aurora Islands) never existed. They were formerly placed between lat. 52° 38′ and 53° 15′ S., and between long. 47° 43′ and 47° 57′ W. of Greenwich. The first reporters of the islands probably saw icebergs in the given locality, and mistook their character. Aurora Island, in the New Hebrides group, has been confounded with the Aurora Island in the Paumotu, Tuamotu, or Low Archipelago. Aurora, Makatea, or Metia Island, lat. 15° 50′ S., long. 148° 13′ W., one of the Low Archipelago, has not been visited for some time, but its elevation would lead to the inference that it could not disappear suddenly; it is fertile and inhabited. This is the island visited by Wilkes, and on which the unique specimens of mollusca were found. It is upwards of 2,500 miles eastward of the New Hebrides.

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